

PHILLIP A. TALBERT  
United States Attorney  
ANTONIO J. PATAKA  
Assistant United States Attorney  
2500 Tulare Street, Suite 4401  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Telephone: (559) 497-4000  
Facsimile: (559) 497-4099

Attorneys for Plaintiff  
United States of America

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,  
  
Plaintiff,  
  
v.  
  
JOSHUA ASTORGA,  
  
Defendant.

CASE NO. 1:22-CR-00055-JLT-SKO  
  
STIPULATION REGARDING EXCLUDABLE  
TIME PERIODS UNDER SPEEDY TRIAL ACT;  
ORDER

**BACKGROUND**

This case is set for a Status Conference on August 31, 2022. On May 13, 2020, this Court issued General Order 618, which suspends all jury trials in the Eastern District of California “until further notice.” Under General Order 618, a judge “may exercise his or her authority to continue matters, excluding time under the Speedy Trial Act with reference to the court’s prior General Order 611 issued on March 17, 2020, . . . with additional findings to support the exclusion in the Judge’s discretion.” General Order 618, ¶ 6 (E.D. Cal. May 13, 2020). In addition, any judge “may order case-by-case exceptions” to General Order 618’s provisions “at the discretion of that Judge or upon the request of counsel, after consultation with counsel and the Clerk of the Court to the extent such an order will impact court staff and operations.” General Order 618, ¶ 7 (E.D. Cal. May 13, 2020). This and previous General Orders were entered to address public health concerns related to COVID-19.

Although the General Orders address the district-wide health concern, the Supreme Court has

1 emphasized that the Speedy Trial Act’s end-of-justice provision “counteract[s] substantive  
 2 openendedness with procedural strictness,” “demand[ing] on-the-record findings” in a particular case.  
 3 *Zedner v. United States*, 547 U.S. 489, 509 (2006). “[W]ithout on-the-record findings, there can be no  
 4 exclusion under” § 3161(h)(7)(A). *Id.* at 507. Moreover, any such failure cannot be harmless. *Id.* at  
 5 509; *see also United States v. Ramirez-Cortez*, 213 F.3d 1149, 1153 (9th Cir. 2000) (explaining that a  
 6 judge ordering an ends-of-justice continuance must set forth explicit findings on the record “either orally  
 7 or in writing”).

8 Based on the plain text of the Speedy Trial Act—which *Zedner* emphasizes as both mandatory  
 9 and inexcusable—General Orders 611, 612, 617, and 618 require specific supplementation. Ends-of-  
 10 justice continuances are excludable only if “the judge granted such continuance on the basis of his  
 11 findings that the ends of justice served by taking such action outweigh the best interest of the public and  
 12 the defendant in a speedy trial.” 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7)(A). Moreover, no such period is excludable  
 13 unless “the court sets forth, in the record of the case, either orally or in writing, its reason or finding that  
 14 the ends of justice served by the granting of such continuance outweigh the best interests of the public  
 15 and the defendant in a speedy trial.” *Id.*

16 The General Orders exclude delay in the “ends of justice.” 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7) (Local Code  
 17 T4). Although the Speedy Trial Act does not directly address continuances stemming from pandemics,  
 18 natural disasters, or other emergencies, this Court has discretion to order a continuance in such  
 19 circumstances. For example, the Ninth Circuit affirmed a two-week ends-of-justice continuance  
 20 following Mt. St. Helens’ eruption. *Furlow v. United States*, 644 F.2d 764 (9th Cir. 1981). The court  
 21 recognized that the eruption created “appreciable difficulty” for the trial to proceed. *Id.* at 767-69; *see*  
 22 *also United States v. Correa*, 182 F. Supp. 326, 329 (S.D.N.Y. 2001) (citing *Furlow* to exclude time  
 23 following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the resultant public emergency).

24 The coronavirus poses a similar, albeit more enduring, “appreciable difficulty” to the prompt  
 25 proceedings mandated by the statutory rules. Recently, the Ninth Circuit enumerated a “non-  
 26 exhaustive” list of seven factors it found to be “relevant” in considering ends-of-justice Speedy Trial Act  
 27 continuances “in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.” *United States v. Olsen*, --- F.3d ---, 2021 WL  
 28 1589359 at \*7 (9th Cir. Apr. 23, 2021). That non-exhaustive list includes: (1) whether a defendant is

1 detained pending trial; (2) how long a defendant has been detained; (3) whether a defendant has invoked  
2 speedy trial rights since the case's inception; (4) whether a defendant, if detained, belongs to a  
3 population that is particularly susceptible to complications if infected with the virus; (5) the seriousness  
4 of the charges a defendant faces, and in particular whether the defendant is accused of violent crimes;  
5 (6) whether there is a reason to suspect recidivism if the charges against the defendant are dismissed;  
6 and (7) whether the district court has the ability to safely conduct a trial. *Id.*

7 In light of the foregoing, this Court should consider the following case-specific facts in finding  
8 excludable delay appropriate in this particular case under the ends-of-justice exception, § 3161(h)(7)  
9 (Local Code T4). If continued, this Court should designate a status conference date of October 19,  
10 2022. *United States v. Lewis*, 611 F.3d 1172, 1176 (9th Cir. 2010) (noting any pretrial continuance must  
11 be "specifically limited in time").

#### 12 STIPULATION

13 Plaintiff United States of America, by and through its counsel of record, and defendant, by and  
14 through defendant's counsel of record, hereby stipulate as follows:

15 1. By previous order, this matter was set for Status Conference on August 31, 2022.

16 2. By this stipulation, defendant now moves to continue the case and set a status conference  
17 on October 19, 2022, at 1:00 p.m., and to exclude time between August 31, 2022, and October 19, 2022,  
18 at 1:00 p.m., under 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7)(A), B(iv) [Local Code T4].

19 3. The parties agree and stipulate, and request that the Court find the following:

20 a) The government has represented that the discovery associated with this case  
21 includes reports, search warrants and affidavits, videos, photographs, and body wire audio  
22 recordings. All of this discovery has been either produced directly to counsel and/or made  
23 available for inspection and copying. Additionally, supplemental discovery was provided. The  
24 government has also conveyed a plea agreement to the defendant for his review.

25 b) Counsel for defendant desires additional time to review discovery, conduct  
26 investigation and research related to the charges, conduct research into any mitigating factors,  
27 consult with his client, discuss a potential plea with the government, and to otherwise prepare for  
28 trial.

1 c) Counsel for defendant believes that failure to grant the above-requested  
2 continuance would deny him the reasonable time necessary for effective preparation, taking into  
3 account the exercise of due diligence.

4 d) The government does not object to the continuance.

5 e) Based on the above-stated findings, the ends of justice served by continuing the  
6 case as requested outweigh the interest of the public and the defendant in a trial within the  
7 original date prescribed by the Speedy Trial Act.

8 f) For the purpose of computing time under the Speedy Trial Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3161,  
9 et seq., within which trial must commence, the time period of August 31, 2022 to October 19,  
10 2022, at 1:00 p.m., inclusive, is deemed excludable pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7)(A), B(iv)  
11 [Local Code T4] because it results from a continuance granted by the Court at defendant's  
12 request on the basis of the Court's finding that the ends of justice served by taking such action  
13 outweigh the best interest of the public and the defendant in a speedy trial.

14 4. Nothing in this stipulation and order shall preclude a finding that other provisions of the  
15 Speedy Trial Act dictate that additional time periods are excludable from the period within which a trial  
16 must commence.

17 IT IS SO STIPULATED.

18  
19  
20 Dated: August 23, 2022

PHILLIP A. TALBERT  
United States Attorney

21  
22 /s/ ANTONIO J. PATACA  
ANTONIO J. PATACA  
Assistant United States Attorney

23  
24  
25 Dated: August 23, 2022

/s/ ROGER D. WILSON  
ROGER D. WILSON  
Counsel for Defendant  
JOSHUA ASTORGA

**ORDER**

IT IS SO ORDERED.

DATED: 8/24/2022

*Sheila K. Oberto*

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THE HONORABLE SHEILA K. OBERTO  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE